

SENATOR RON LATZ

Serving District 44:

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Committees:

Judiciary and Public Safety Committee
(*Lead DFL Member*)

Higher Education Committee



Senate

State of Minnesota

August 15, 2011

Ms. Marlene Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: LightSquared Technical Working Group Report, IB Docket No. 11-109

Dear Ms. Dortch:

I am writing to ask the Commission's help to improve the access of low-income, minority and other un-served and underserved communities to essential telecommunications services, including wireless high-speed Internet and cell phones.

I represent a legislative district in suburban Minneapolis. While many of my constituents are middle-class and upper-middle class, there are pockets of unemployment and poverty in my district.

One of the important tools for economic recovery is job growth in the technology sector. America is competing globally and my district must have access to wireless high-speed internet if technology companies are going to start and grow. As the Commission found in its National Broadband Plan:

Broadband is a platform for social and economic opportunity. It can lower geographic barriers and help minimize socioeconomic disparities—connecting people from otherwise disconnected communities to job opportunities, avenues for educational advancement and channels for communication. Broadband is a particularly important platform for historically disadvantaged communities including racial and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and recent immigrants.

I agree with this statement. But the reality is that there is a great income gap in access to Broadband. Households with incomes below \$20,000 have access to Broadband at less than one-third the rate of households over \$75,000. Yet access to Broadband is increasingly important for all Americans to actively participate in the workforce. Broadband can serve as a platform for

educational, economic and social opportunities. It can also minimize economic disparities, since a growing percentage of jobs are tied to technology skills and knowledge.

My constituents are also facing challenges with rising cell phone costs. The consolidation of the cell phone market continues, with fewer options and less competition in the cell phone market. The application of LightSquared to provide enhanced nationwide Broadband service and cell phone coverage is good news. It will provide greater competition in the cell phone marketplace, which will make cell phone coverage more affordable for individuals and families.

I encourage the Commission to support LightSquared's proposal, which will make technology more accessible and more affordable for low-income citizens like those I represent.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron Latz', with a stylized flourish at the end.

RonLatz
State Senator